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21 December 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: NIE Program for 1954

BACKGROUND

1. While some internal planning was done earlier, the first formal annual program of NIE's in the preparation of which the IAC agencies participated was that for 1953 (IAC-D-1/2).
2. The 1953 program was revised quarterly (IAC-D-1/3, IAC-D-1/4, IAC-D-1/5).

SUBSTANCE

3. Prior to discussion of this program with the agencies, it was submitted to the NSC Planning Board. It incorporates the Board's suggestions as to subjects and timing.

4. This program is generally acceptable to all of the agencies.

5. As far as we know, only one item is likely to be challenged. The Air Force will resist including an estimate on Soviet Air Defense Capabilities in the 1954 program (Item 20, page 5). The Air Force maintains that such an estimate is departmental intelligence and should be handled solely by the Air Force.

6. Leaving aside our belief that the interdepartmental coordination process results in more objective evaluation of intelligence data than is likely to result from the efforts of any individual intelligence service, we believe that an estimate on Soviet Air Defense Capabilities should be handled through the machinery of the national intelligence community for the following reasons:

a. The intelligence on this subject does not pertain solely to one department, since the Army and the Navy turn up vital information and have primary interest in such matters as antiaircraft artillery capabilities and naval radar picket lines. Thus, the subject matter is interdepartmental in the sense that it is an interservice problem involving all the military agencies, not strictly an Air Force problem.

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b. It is impossible to do justice to this subject, particularly its long-range aspects, without bringing in estimates of economic productive capability and general scientific capabilities. In other words, O/RN and O/SI must be brought into the act, and the best way to get them in at the most effective stage of preparation of the report is to activate the normal national intelligence process.

2. The subject of Soviet Air Defense Capabilities is a vital factor and is closely linked with other factors in our general estimates of Soviet strategic capabilities and intentions. It is essential that the national intelligence community have an understanding in depth of this problem in arriving at its over-all conclusions. It is particularly important that the National Security Council and other policy-planning components of the government feel confident that our National Intelligence Estimates on Soviet strategic capabilities and intentions reflect this depth of understanding about Soviet air defense problem. Singling out this aspect of intelligence on the USSR for intensive study is parallel with our preparation of an estimate on the equally vital factor of Soviet capabilities for attacking the United States (SI-36/1), which was specifically requested by the National Security Council.

3. The Board is convinced that the many manhours required to produce the predecessor estimate (SI-5) is sufficient evidence of community interest and lack of willingness to rely solely on the findings of a single agency to justify another interdepartmental effort. If you run into general opposition by the IAC to its inclusion in the program, we suggest that the interdepartmental nature of the estimate be more clearly emphasized by broadening its scope. For example, the title could be changed to "Soviet Defense Capabilities Against Air Attack". The scope would then include passive as well as active measures taken to protect the basis of the war economy (dispersing industry, stockpiling essential goods, bolstering the civil defense effort.)

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